



Sheryl L. Spiller
Director

Phil Ansell
Chief Deputy

APPROVED RELATIVE CAREGIVER PROGRAM FACT SHEET

The Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) Program is a new program offered by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) which extends **cash aid** benefits to **relative** caregivers who provide care for children who are ineligible to receive federal Foster Care benefits otherwise known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children – Foster Care (AFDC-FC). DCFS will conduct the ARC eligibility determination for each non-federally eligible child **and** issue the ARC payment.

Background

The Alliance for Children's Rights played a significant role to motivate Legislature to establish the ARC Program which was implemented with the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 855. This Program was developed to address the inequality between the rates paid to a relative caregiver for children who are ineligible for AFDC-FC in comparison to children who are federally eligible to receive the basic foster care rate from the AFDC-FC Program.

The ARC Program is not a mandated program, but rather grants counties the opportunity to opt-in to participate in the Program and provides **state** funds to counties effective January 1, 2015 who would like to provide financial support to non-federal eligible children. On March 12, 2015, Los Angeles County notified the California Department of Social Services of their interest to participate in the ARC Program.

Prior to the passage of SB 855, a relative caregiver caring for a non-federal eligible AFDC-FC child was referred to the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) to apply for CalWORKs benefits. Below is an example of the inequality of the payment rates for a non-needy caretaker who receives a CalWORKs payment in comparison to a non-caretaker relative who receives a foster care payment.

MARY: <u>Placed</u> by DCFS with a <u>non-relative</u> foster parent	\$838 (state foster care for a 15-20 year old child)
RACHEL: <u>Placed</u> by DCFS with grandma (relative)	\$387 (CalWORKs)

With the passage of SB 855, the caregivers who care for a non-federal eligible AFDC-FC child can now receive an ARC payment equivalent to the current foster care rate which ranges based on the child's age.

Eligibility Requirements

The following criteria must be fulfilled to be eligible to the ARC Program which will be determined by DCFS:

- The child must reside in California;
- The child must be a dependent or ward of the California juvenile court;
- The child must not be federally eligible to the AFDC-FC program; **and**
- An ARC 1 application is completed.

CalWORKs Program Requirements Waived	CalWORKs Program Requirements Not Waived, but follow DCFS requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Fingerprinting;○ Face-to-Face interviews;○ Photo identification;○ Immunization records;○ School attendance requirements;○ Cal-Learn & Welfare-to-Work participation;○ Redeterminations; and○ SAR 7 reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Property requirements; and<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ \$10,000 limit○ Income requirements.

Needy Caretaker Relatives

Needy caretaker relatives will continue to be eligible to receive CalWORKs benefits in the same manner as it is currently done for a needy caretaker relative caring for a foster care child. The CalWORKs benefit amount for the needy caretaker relative will continue to be administered by DPSS.

CalFresh

Caretaker relatives who receive CalFresh benefits have the option to exclude the Foster child(ren) and his/her ARC payment so that it does not impact the household's eligibility to CalFresh. Although the amount of CalFresh benefits will be reduced, the overall amount of cash benefits the caretaker receives will increase.

Medi-Cal

Children will continue to be eligible for Medi-Cal under the ARC program as there is no impact to the ARC eligible child as the Medi-Cal portion will be administered by DCFS.

Children aided under the ARC program will have the option to receive fee for service Medi-Cal or remain in a managed care plan.

Outreach

Eligibility staff, including Customer Service Center Eligibility Workers, must inform the needy and non-needy caregivers about their potential eligibility to ARC by referring them to call the DCFS hotline number, 1-800-697-4444 anytime between 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday **and** to the DCFS ARC website for further information: <http://lacdcs.org/ARCWeb/index.html>. In addition, Eligibility staff will continue to process the CalWORKs application according to existing policy and procedures.